

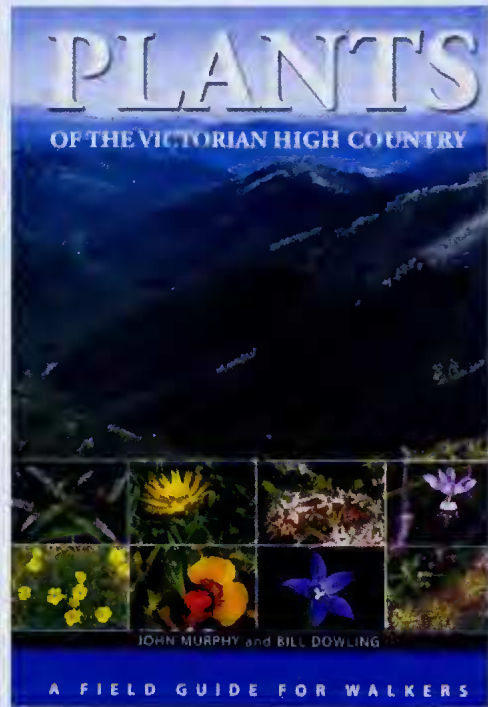
## Plants of the Victorian High Country: a field guide for walkers

by John Murphy and Bill Dowling

Publisher: CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Victoria 2012. 152 pages, paperback, 114 colour photographs. ISBN 9780643104631. RRP \$29.95.

This book was written with walkers of the Victorian High Country in mind, and is presented in simple terms that do not presume a previous botanical knowledge. In the introductory pages, the authors begin with a very brief segment explaining that plant identification is based on a binomial (two name) system including a genus and a species, and that plants are organised into families. They indicate that common names can cause confusion and cite the example that the Victorian, South Australian and Tasmanian blue gums are three different plant species. This is a useful warning to people when discussing plants; they should confirm they are speaking about the same plant when using common names. A common name may be given to more than one plant, as in the example provided, but one plant may have more than one common name. Furthermore, a common name may suggest an affinity that does not occur, e.g. the She-oak, in the genus *Allocasuarina*, is not an oak, which is in the genus *Quercus*.

It is pleasing to see that the authors have made a point of including the most common High Country plants as these are most likely to be noted by a walker. Being able to place a name to these plants will, hopefully, encourage a stronger desire to care for their survival and engender a deeper interest in the world of botany. On the whole, the photographs are of good quality, although there is the occasional slightly out of focus shot. The detail provided generally is sufficient to aid identification, especially when coupled with the easily understood plant descriptions. In each instance, the zone or zones in which the species can be found is stated and a brief description of the leaves and flowers provided. Flowering times also are given. An explanation of the environmental zones



is provided in the pages prior to those containing the plant photographs and descriptions.

The photographs are arranged in sections containing similar types of plants: herbs (other than daisies), daisy herbs, low woody shrubs, tall shrubs and trees (other than eucalypts) and eucalypts. The reader is instructed to determine which of these groups their plant of interest belongs to, go to the key for that group and follow the key to determine which plant they are likely to have and then compare it with the photographs and descriptions. This is fine and easily done; however, it would have been useful

if page numbers were provided for these keys. Anyone with an interest in the High Country is recommended to buy this book. It is relatively inexpensive and will allow you to easily identify these delightful plants and, once on a first name basis with these common plants, you will be amazed at how many more you will begin

to notice, adding even more enjoyment to your travels of our magnificent High Country.

**Maria Gibson**

School of Life and Environmental Sciences,  
Deakin University,  
221 Burwood Highway,  
Burwood, Victoria 3125

## Birds of Prey of Australia: a field guide

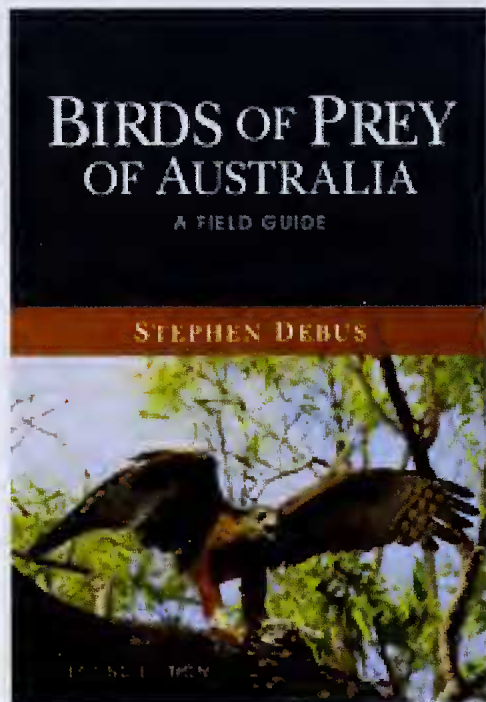
by Stephen Debus

Publisher: *CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne, 2 edn, 2012. 208 pages, paperback.*  
*ISBN 9780643104365. RRP \$39.95.*

Over the past few decades we have seen a steady supply of specialist bird books to an ever increasing and appreciative audience. The original edition of this book has been completely revised and updated with new sections. This book is one of many, and like others has both good and not so good aspects. It remains for the reader to consider these for a brief period then delve into the meat of the subject much as a raptor does into its prey.

Obviously produced for the avid enthusiast lacking access to world literature obtainable through specialist journals, the current book summarises this information into readable text without the scientific jargon, which might otherwise leave readers floundering. Also the author includes his own and colleagues' observations in the work and it becomes a medium for this extensive knowledge to be spread and assimilated.

The book is in two parts preceded by a very readable introductory section that captures the essence of the study of those diurnal birds known collectively as 'birds of prey' or 'raptors'. Subjects include information describing what these are, behaviour and breeding, rehabilitating injured or sick birds, conservation and taxonomy and range of the group. The first major part is the field guide containing species information. This includes information on age



plumages, sizes and finally well executed illustrations provided by the accomplished wildlife artist Jeff Davies. Part 1 concludes with a section titled 'Difficult species-pairs' illustrating similarly plumaged birds which are often difficult to separate or identify in the wild. It also